

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-56 (canceled).

57. (new) A method for providing directory assistance services to a caller comprising:

receiving a call from the caller, the call including a directory assistance request;

in response to the directory assistance request, attempting to establish a telephonic connection between the caller and a destination party;

detecting a connection status signal concerning an establishment of the telephonic connection;

before automatically transferring the caller to a directory assistance provider, determining whether the connection status signal indicates a non-answering condition; and

automatically transferring the caller to a directory assistance provider, and offering a selected service to the caller when it is determined that the connection status signal indicates a non-answering condition.

58. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the directory assistance provider comprises a voice server.

59. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the directory assistance provider comprises a live operator.

60. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the connection status signal includes a busy signal.

61. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the non-answering condition includes

a ring-no-answer condition.

62. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the non-answering condition includes a network communication failure.

63. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service includes recording a message to be delivered to the destination party.

64. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service includes conveying information concerning the destination party to the caller.

65. (new) The method of claim 64, wherein the information includes a telephone number associated with the destination party.

66. (new) The method of claim 64, wherein the information is conveyed to the caller via a communication device associated with the caller.

67. (new) The method of claim 66, wherein the communication device includes a pager.

68. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the telephonic connection is established in accordance with an out-of-band signaling scheme.

69. (new) The method of claim 68, wherein the out-of-band signaling scheme includes a common channel signaling system 7 (CCSS7) scheme.

70. (new) A method for providing directory assistance services to a caller comprising:

receiving a call from the caller, the call including a directory assistance request;
in response to the directory assistance request, attempting to establish a telephonic connection between the caller and a destination party;
detecting a connection status signal concerning an establishment of the telephonic connection;
before automatically transferring the caller to a directory assistance provider,
determining whether the connection status signal indicates a ring-no-answer condition;
and
automatically transferring the caller to a directory assistance provider while continuing the attempt to establish the telephonic connection when it is determined that the connection status signal indicates a ring-no-answer condition.

71. (new) The method of claim 70, wherein the directory assistance provider comprises a voice server.

72. (new) The method of claim 70, wherein the directory assistance provider comprises a live operator.

73. (new) The method of claim 70, wherein the connection status signal includes a ring tone, the method further comprising muting the ring tone after the caller is transferred to the directory assistance provider.

74. (new) The method of claim 70, further comprising offering a selected service to the caller after the caller is transferred to the directory assistance provider.

75. (new) The method of claim 74, wherein the selected service includes recording a message to be delivered to the destination party.

76. (new) The method of claim 74, wherein the selected service includes conveying information concerning the destination party to the caller.

77. (new) The method of claim 76, wherein the information includes a telephone number associated with the destination party.

78. (new) The method of claim 76, wherein the information is conveyed to the caller via a communication device associated with the caller.

79. (new) The method of claim 78, wherein the communication device includes a pager.

80. (new) The method of claim 70, wherein the telephonic connection is established in accordance with an out-of-band signaling scheme.

81. (new) The method of claim 80, wherein the out-of-band signaling scheme includes a CCSS7 scheme.